

[October 10, 1990]

PRESS RELEASE

AFRICAN ART SPECIALIST TO LECTURE AT ART MUSEUM

Henry Drewal, internationally known for his research in African art, particularly among the Yoruba peoples of West Africa, will give a lecture using slides and video, "Celebrating Spirits: African Masks in the Museum Collection," at The Cleveland Museum of Art. The Museum's consultant for African art, Dr. Drewal will speak on Wednesday, March 14, at 5:45 pm, as part of the **Curator's Choice** lecture series introducing the newest members of the Museum's curatorial staff.

The ancient and enduring artistic tradition of masking in Black Africa--dating as early as 8,000 B.C. in the central Sahara--involves creating and performing with masks and costumes, giving form, substance, movement, sound, color, and texture, to beings from the otherworld. Maskers are transformed, bringing these unseen supernatural forces into our tangible, visible world.

Henry Drewal became interested in African art in 1964 while serving as a Peace Corps teacher in a Nigerian town, where he apprenticed himself to a Yoruba sculptor. He earned his doctorate in the African studies program at Columbia University in 1973. He spent six months of 1986 in Nigeria researching the highly acclaimed exhibition of Yoruba art which will be on view at the Museum from October 10 through December 9, 1990. Dr. Drewal has undertaken the reinstallation of the African collection--finding the best ways to highlight the most important and beautiful objects--to be completed this summer. His main goal in studying African art is to reach beyond the thinking of a Westerner "to find out what the objects mean to the people who created them and who use them."

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The **Curator's Choice** series will include Margaret Young-Sanchez, Assistant Curator, Later Western Art, who will speak on "Pre-Columbian Sculpture of Mexico's Gulf Coast" (April 11), and Bruce Robertson, Assistant Curator of American Paintings, who will speak on "Founding Fathers and Mothers: Collecting American Art" (May 9).

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